

PART VII

Farm Marketing and Level of Living

Location for Marketing

Island County farms are favorably located for marketing in the metropolitan area of the Puget Sound Basin. Once handicapped by an island location and dependence on infrequent ferrying and barging service, the area is now in rapid and economical communication with the mainland. Modern ferry service and bridges to the mainland now give Island County a more central location. Within a radius of 100 miles of Coupeville on Whidbey Island there is an accessible market of over 1,000,000 persons living in the Puget Sound area. By ferry and highway Island County farms are within two hours travel time to Seattle. While the distance adds to cost of hauling crops, livestock and dairy products to market, it does not prohibit Island County commercial farmers from competing in the metropolitan marketing area.

Transportation

In recent years Island County has become almost entirely dependent on truck transportation by highway and ferry. The area has never had any railroad connection to the mainland. Dependence on boats, barges and cargo-carrying ferries has lessened markedly since 1935. Today the bulk of Island County's milk, eggs, poultry, grain, vegetables, berries and forest products are hauled by contract truckers and farmer-owned trucks to the mainland via state highway 1-D. This route connects to the mainland via the Deception Pass Bridge in the north and by the Columbia Beach-Mukilteo ferry across a narrow channel in the south. Camano Island is connected to the mainland by highway 1-Y across a narrow tidal flat. The state, county and private highway system gives a good access to markets for nearly all farms. The two major islands of the county contain 194 miles of state primary hard-surfaced roads and 215 miles of gravelled county roads serving farmlands.

The Washington State Ferries, a state-owned utility, provides scheduled service from the south end of Whidbey Island to Mukilteo, a mainland point between Everett and Seattle. Farm produce from Coupeville and southward destined for Seattle uses this route. Ferry service includes a crossing every half-hour and 32 crossings per day from the Columbia Beach terminal to the mainland. Truck and trailer tolls on the ferry add a small cost of \$1.50 per pick-up truck and \$5 to \$7 for larger trucks. Toll charges add about 50 cents cost per ton of bulky supplies and products being hauled into and exported from Whidbey Island.

Income, Value of Farm Products Sold

Agricultural marketing in Island County during 1954 involved eight major types of products and returned a gross income of over \$2,588,000 to the farming population. Total sales were less than in 1949 when the total was about \$2,833,000. This resulted from a decline in the number of commercial farming operations. In total value of products marketed by farmers, Island County ranked thirtieth in the state although in land area it ranked only thirty-ninth.

Highly productive poultry and dairy farms make agricultural income relatively high per unit of farmland area. Poultry farming of an intensive type is a major source of farm income.

Total Value of Farm Products Sold in 1954: \$2,588,262

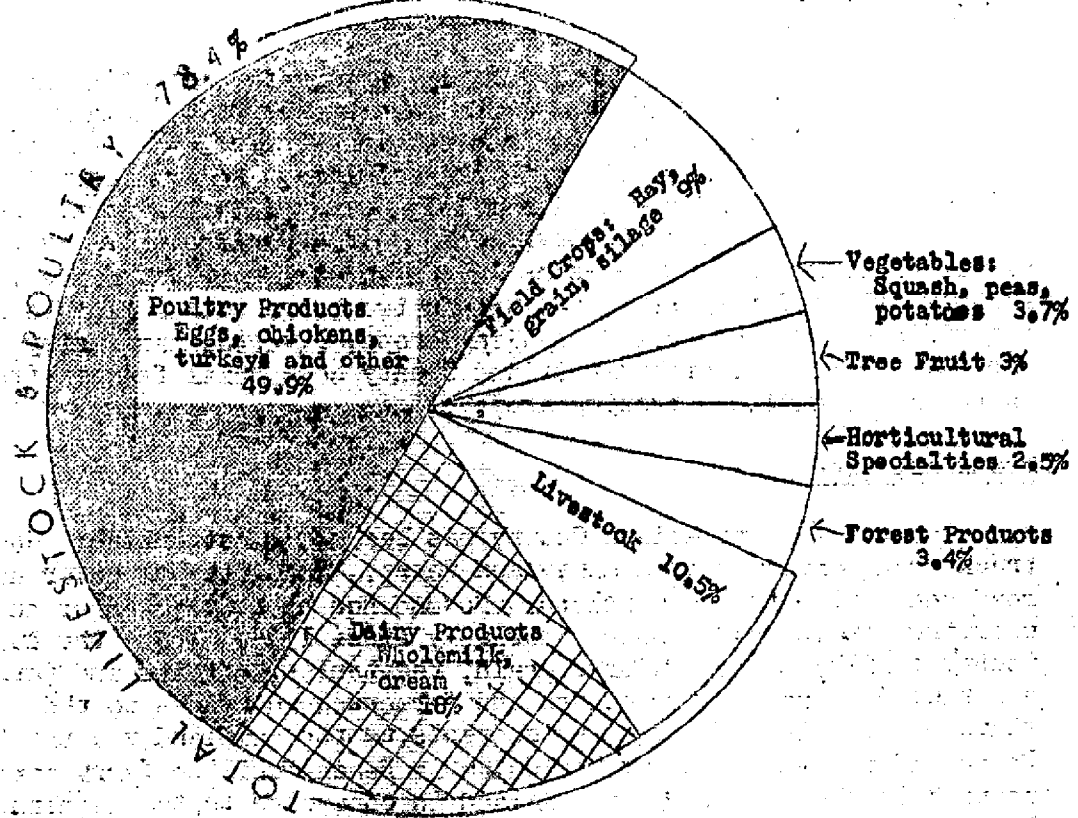


Figure 14.- Sources of Cash Income, Island County Farms, 1954

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Farm gross income from sales of products was divided up among 296 commercial farms in 1954. Only about half of all rural places defined as farms by the Census were classified as commercial operations selling \$250 or more worth of products. Noncommercial farms, largely part-time and residential, numbered 325. A large proportion of farm sales are made by farms in the annual gross income classes of \$2,500 to \$10,000 per year. Good to high income farms receiving \$10,000 to over \$25,000 number about 105 which is relatively high in proportion to the total number of farms. The high income farms are mainly of the dairy and poultry types.

Marketing Eggs and Poultry

The sale and handling of poultry and poultry products is the most important field of agricultural marketing. Chickens, eggs, turkeys and other poultry brought in about half of all gross farm income during 1954. Poultry is over a million dollar annual industry, and in 1954 when last measured by the Census, it returned over \$1,291,000 to poultry farmers. Island County was Washington's ninth most important poultry county in that year. About 220 farms in the county marketed live poultry or eggs during 1954.

Commercial turkeys were the main specialty in poultry marketing in 1954. There were 35 turkey producing farms which sold a total of 88,000 birds. Turkey marketings to mainland points brought a gross return of about \$490,000 in 1954. Turkeys are marketed mainly through the Washington Farmer's Cooperative and are hauled to the Cooperative's processing plant in Mount Vernon on the mainland. Some are sold to poultry processing plants in the Seattle metropolitan area.

Fresh egg marketing is a second major field of cash returns. About 170 farms sold over one million dozen eggs, valued at about \$470,000 during 1954. Eggs are marketed mainly through the Washington Farmer's Cooperative plant at Mount Vernon in Skagit County. Some eggs are sold locally or delivered to dealers and retailers in Everett and Seattle.

Sales of chickens and fryer chickens are third in the overall poultry industry. Over 200 farms sold live chickens for slaughter and breeding or laying stock in 1954. About 412,000 birds were sold, valued at \$324,000. Most chickens and fryers were hauled to Mount Vernon for processing. The production of broilers or young fryer chickens was a specialty on 23 farms in 1954. Production and sales in that year were 350,000 fryers with a return of \$276,000 to the poultrymen raising them.

Table 29.- Livestock and Livestock Products Marketed
Island County, 1954

Class of Livestock Products Sold	Quantity Marketed	Amount Received By Farmers
Dairy Products		
Whole milk-----	11,700,927 lbs.	\$ 459,309
Butterfat-----	13,283 lbs.	6,597
Total all dairy products		\$ 465,906
Poultry and poultry products		
Chickens-----	412,155 birds	\$ 324,349
Eggs-----	1,143,731 dozen	470,308
Turkeys, ducks, geese----		496,533
Total all poultry & poultry products		\$1,291,190
Animals sold alive		
Cattle-----	1,334 head	\$ 182,687
Calves-----	889 head	27,641
Hogs and pigs-----	1,453 head	45,250
Sheep and lambs-----	675 head	9,269
Horses and mules-----	19 head	3,080
Total all animals sold alive		\$ 267,927
Other livestock and livestock products sold-----		\$ 3,808
Total amount received for livestock and livestock products-----		\$2,028,831

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Trade in farm-produced dairy products is the second major agricultural activity within Island County. While smaller than in the years prior to 1950 export of whole milk and a minor amount of cream approaches an annual sales value of \$500,000 to Island County agriculture. Commercial dairying is practiced by about 200 farms in Island County. In 1957 there were 60 grade A milk producing farms which were shipping milk into Seattle and its suburban cities. Island County is part of the greater Seattle or Puget Sound metropolitan area milkshed.

Most Island County whole milk is hauled to mainland milk distributing plants under rules and pricing regulations under a Federal Milk Order governing the Puget Sound Milk Marketing Area which includes 15 dairy counties in western Washington. In November 1957 there were 60 grade A milk producers in Island County who were shipping under the rules of the Federal Milk Order. 1/ Shipments from Island County were about 570,000 pounds per month. Over 80 percent of the milk was being moved to the urban dairy plants by tanker trucks. Major delivery points of bulk whole milk for Island County dairymen are at bottling and processing plants at Oak Harbor, Anacortes, Mount Vernon, Burlington, Everett and north Seattle.

Marketing Live Animals

About 300 farms in Island County marketed live animals during 1954. These involved sales to slaughter plants, country buyers, neighboring farmers and to bidders in community auction livestock salesyards in northwestern Washington. Total sales of slaughter, feeder and breeding stock during the year was nearly \$268,000. Cattle of the dairy cull and beef types and calves for veal or as feeders accounted for the bulk of sales. Sales of hogs were second in importance, amounting to \$47,000. Sales of sheep, horses and goats were relatively minor. Most livestock farmers making sales haul their animals to livestock yards in Seattle and Everett and to state licensed community auction yards at Burlington and Sedro Woolley in neighboring Skagit County.

Marketing Crops

Commercial crops made up about one-fifth of Island County farm marketings in 1954. All crops sold locally and exported brought returns of over \$470,000. Forage and feed crops of hay and grain mainly marketed locally to poultry and livestock farmers were most valuable, accounting for nearly \$234,000. Major feed crops sold were 43,000 bushels of wheat, 36,000 oats and 4,500 barley. Some of this grain goes to custom feed mills or to commercial feed mills at Oak Harbor, Mount Vernon and the Seattle area serving the poultry industry. Baled hay is sold in minor amounts locally, amounting to about 2,000 tons per year. Normally the area has a shortage of alfalfa and farmers import it from eastern Washington.

1/ Marketing Service Information Reports, Nicholas L. Keyook, Market Administrator, Puget Sound, Washington Milk Marketing Area. Seattle Washington, November 1957.

Commercial vegetables sold to processors in the Mount Vernon, La Conner and Stanwood areas and to fresh market wholesale and retail outlets in the Everett and Seattle market areas are the second most valuable crops marketed. About 40 farms were growing commercial vegetables in 1954 and their total sales were approximately \$96,000. Green peas and winter squash are the two most important commercial vegetables. In some recent years about 2,000 tons of peas have been sold to processors. Commercial pea crops in some years are valued at over \$100,000. Winter squash in recent years has been harvested from 300 to 400 acres for fresh market in Seattle and other cities with a market value of about \$50,000.

The sale of horticultural specialties valued at \$65,000 in 1954 is limited to less than a dozen farms. Some flowers and plants are sold at roadside stands. Major items sold off the island to handlers on the mainland are flower bulbs and certified vegetable seeds. Most of these are marketed through Burlington and Mount Vernon.

Berry and tree fruit sales in 1954 were valued at nearly \$77,000. Most berries were sold to processors in Skagit and Snohomish Counties. Most of the loganberry crop went to a Seattle winery. There are generally local sales to retailers, U-pickers and tourists.

Table 30.- Crops Marketed From Island County Farms, 1954

Type of Crop Sold	Amount Received By Farmers (Dollars)	Percent All Crops Sold
Field Crops (wheat, barley, hay, grass seeds, potatoes, etc.)	\$232,809	49.4
Vegetables (green peas, squash, sweet corn, cucumbers, etc.)	96,242	20.4
Fruits, Nuts and Berries (peaches, cherries, grapes, filberts, strawberries, loganberries, blackberries)	76,971	16.3
Horticultural Specialties (flower and vegetable seeds, flower plants, bulbs, etc.)	<u>65,220</u>	<u>13.9</u>
Total amount received by farmers for cash crops	\$471,242	100.0

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Marketing Forest Products

Farm forest products are increasingly important in Island County as a source of farm income. Most farms and rural properties of southern Whidbey Island and Camano Island have woodlands. In 1954 the Census found that 50 to 170 farms were selling four major types of forest products such as firewood, sawlogs, fence posts and pulpwood. For the items in the survey the total sale value was nearly \$88,790. The Census did not, however, enumerate sales of Christmas trees, huckleberry brush, salal, Cascara bark and sword ferns which are equally or more valuable. In 1954 Island County ranked 16th among Washington counties in value of farm forest products sold.

Island County farm foresters have nearby market outlets. Truckloads of sawlogs and pulpwood are marketed to major tidewater mills at Anacortes and Everett. Minor forest products such as Christmas trees and decorative greens are marketed through buying stations at Langley and to handlers in Seattle.

Table 31.-- Forest Products on Farms
Island County, 1954

Type of Product	Farms Reporting	Quantity
Firewood and fuelwood cut-----	172	1,349 cords
Fence posts cut-----	51	5,786 posts
Sawlogs and veneer logs cut-----	52	4,703 M bd. ft.
Pulpwood cut-----	30	2,226 cords
Total value of farm forest products---	72	\$88,789

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Specified Farm Expenditures, Farm Operation Costs

Island County farmers who reported expenditures in 1954 spent over \$1,859,276 during the year for feed, labor and supplies used in crop and livestock production. Chief farming expense was for livestock and poultry feed. Nearly 570 farms bought feed and this cost totaled \$1,486,865 during 1954. As an average, feed costs ran about \$2,608 per farm. Wages and expenses paid for hired labor was a second major cost item in Island County agriculture. Labor was hired by 236 farms which paid an average of \$803.30 per farm. The farm work payroll ran over \$189,579 during 1954. Compared with 1949, feed costs on farms have been reduced slightly but 1954 census figures show that costs for labor, machine hire, petroleum and fertilizers have increased.

Servicing and supplying of Island County's 657 farms is a major basis of business in Oak Harbor, Coupeville and Stanwood. This farm trade area is a market for over \$1,859,000 worth of supplies and equipment each year.

Table 32.-- Specified Farm Expenditures in 1954, Island County

Type of Expenditure	Number of Farms Reporting	Expenditure of All Farms	Average Per Farm
Machine hire.....	291	\$ 60,522	\$ 207.97
Hired labor.....	236	189,579	803.30
Feed for livestock and poultry	570	1,486,865	2,608.54
Gasoline, petroleum fuel & oil	455	89,820	197.40
Commercial fertilizer.....	185	30,850	166.75
Lime and liming materials.....	11	1,640	149.09
Total production costs....		\$1,859,276	

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Agricultural Income Compared to Other Income Sources

A study published in 1954 has shown that net income derived from net profits in agriculture is in the range of \$700,000 to \$800,000 per year. In

the last year analyzed, 1952, it was found that net income from agriculture from all farms totaled \$766,000. This recent study at Washington State College also showed that agricultural income had become less important in the county economy. In 1952 agriculture made up only 7 percent of all income in the area. Since 1945, government employment in U. S. Naval aviation activities has become the largest source of wages. In 1952 government payrolls accounted for about 38 percent of all income. Agriculture in the early 1950's was exceeded by government, construction and retail and wholesale trades in the total county economy.

Table 33.- Types and Sources of Income 1950-1952, Island County 1/

Type and Source of Income	Income In Dollars By Years			Percentage of County Income by Years		
	1950.	1951	1952	1950	1951	1952
Agriculture	\$ 824,000	\$ 711,000	\$ 766,000	9.3	7.3	7.0
Construction	82,000	565,000	1,133,000	.9	5.8	10.3
Government	3,431,000	3,903,000	4,145,000	38.6	40.2	37.8
Manufacturing	439,000	545,000	575,000	5.0	5.6	5.2
Service	407,000	407,000	526,000	4.6	4.2	4.8
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	261,000	303,000	301,000	3.0	3.1	2.8
Trade	873,000	971,000	1,178,000	9.8	10.0	10.7
Miscellaneous	91,000	119,000	136,000	1.0	1.2	1.2
Property Income	1,165,000	1,237,000	1,296,000	13.1	12.7	11.8
Other Income	1,307,000	956,000	920,000	14.7	9.9	8.4
Total	\$8,880,000	\$9,717,000	\$10,976,000	100.0	100.0	100.0

1/ John A. Guthrie and Stanley E. Boyle, County Income Payments in Washington, 1950-1952. Pullman, Wash. Washington State College, Bulletin No. 26.

Level of Living on Island County Farms

On the whole, farm incomes and levels of living are below those found in cities and towns. Because of the scattered and isolated location of many farms, such conveniences as electricity, hot and cold running water and telephones have not been as easily available to farm families. This is the general situation in American agriculture.

Island County's farming districts compare favorably with those of all rural areas of America and the State of Washington in living conditions. In fact, they measure above the general farm average for the United States and are equal average conditions for all the farming regions of Washington. Average farm income in Island County was \$2,035 per farm family in 1950. This was above the national average and slightly below the state average. Rural electrification is well advanced. About 94 percent of farms have electric service, which is above the national and state averages. The use of electrical home appliances and other labor-saving conveniences is above the general use of these over the nation's farming regions. Use of telephones and modern household plumbing also is above the state and national average. As a whole, the island farms were less isolated and closer to trading centers than the average in all

American counties. The entire farm family level-of-living in Island County was graded 154 compared with grades of 122 for the nation and 154 for the state in a recent study of Washington farm people at the State College of Washington.

Table 34.- Indices of Level of Living of Island County Farm Families, 1950 Compared with State and National Averages

Index Items	Percentage of total farm families with listed index items		
	United States	Washington	Island County
Farm Family Level-of-Living	122	154	154
Median Income per Family	\$1,567	\$2,380	\$2,035
Electricity	78.3%	92.5%	94.1%
Electric Hot Water Heater	17.4	49.1	30.5
Electric Washing Machine	58.7	85.4	84.8
Home Freezers	12.1	14.5	25.6
Mech. Refrigerators	62.7	77.4	74.4
Telephone	38.2	57.5	60.6
Hot and Cold Water Plumbing	23.8	70.4	73.7
Central Heating	18.1	17.8	7.3
Houses with More than One Person per Room	22.3	15.7	12.5
Automobiles	63.0	77.6	82.3
Travel 10 Miles or More to Trading Center	21.4	20.5	9.3

Source: Walter L. Slocum and Carol L. Stone, The Farm People of Washington at Mid-Century, State College of Washington, Bulletin 557, February 1955, Pullman, Washington.

As history and statistics presented in these pages have shown, Island County agriculture is a record of progress by its industrious people. In a century of time those who have chosen to live on the soil in this island area of north Puget Sound have made it an important farming region of the state. Its numerous poultry, dairy and specialty crop farms add much to the economic well-being of the Puget Sound Basin and the local county economy. Each farm on Whidbey and Camano Islands stands as a living monument to the spirit of enterprise and faith of the families who have followed agriculture in Island County.